

enter as much into detail as this subject requires. I must be content with a very general glance, noting only that which is of particular interest.

I will therefore now pass from the consideration of the painting of the catacombs, to notice one of the earliest descriptions of the decoration of a Christian church that has come down to us. This is found in one of the epistles of Paulinus, bishop of Nola, who flourished at the latter half of the fourth century, the contemporary of St. Augustine and Jerome. Paulinus was a native of Aquino, of senatorial rank, and of great wealth; he became a convert to Christianity, and was exceedingly zealous in his new faith; in proof of which he constructed a magnificent church near Nola, in honour of St. Felix, the martyr, of which he has given a very interesting and minute description, both of the arrangement and of the nature of its decoration. Among other things he describes the paintings introduced on the walls and vaulting, all of which appear to have been selected from the Old Testament. He begins, "Now I will that you see the pictures in the painted sales (porticibus) in a long company, and a little you may weary your supine neck, whilst with inclined countenance you read through all." Then he continues to enumerate and descant on the several subjects, from which it appears that it contained the story of Moses, the passage of Jordan, the story of Ruth and Orpah, and arranged on walls opposite to each other, the temptation of Job, story of Tobit, Judith, and Esther.

We also learn from him that the custom of affixing descriptive legends, or text illustration of the subjects, had already obtained, for he says, alluding to the subject, "which is expressed above by titles, that the letter may shew what the hand has explained." He concludes by asking his friend, if by chance he should require some reason for this new practice of painting the sacred houses, he will show it in a few words. He then goes on to say, that the place was frequented by a rustic crowd "not learned in reading," for whose edification it was intended, and that such had been the effect, that "behold! frequent vigils extend through the whole night."

In the 4th century the arts were rapidly declining; but if we could place confidence in descriptions, we might yet imagine a power existing of no mean character. Among the records of the second Council of Nice, there is an account of a painting of the martyrdom of St. Euphemia, given by Arterius, bishop of Amasia, belonging to this era, in which the diversity of expression is particularly noted and described, and the highest encomiums are bestowed upon the painter, not indeed undeservedly, if his work answered the description. "Greatly I admire," says he, "the painter who the effect of fighting nature, that is to say, modesty and manliness, could combine." And in another part he bears testimony to the faithful and expressive colouring thus:—"For so manifestly and evidently the painter has coloured the drops of blood, that you might swear it to flow from the lips, and with weeping you are compelled to depart." A similar testimony, drawn from the same authority, is given by Gregory Nyssen, who said he could not contemplate a picture of the Abraham about to offer up his son without shedding tears. We must, however, accept these testimonies with some reserve; for at a later time, when the arts were in the lowest state of degradation, it is not uncommon to meet with similar encomiums. There can be no doubt, then, that the close of this century saw the principle of decorating churches with paintings established far and wide, wherever Christianity was to be found. And it seems to have gone on silently, without encountering any opposition, except, perhaps, from small communities of heretics.

In this country there can be no doubt that it was introduced with Christianity itself, by the missionary St. Augustine. A pope, Gregory the Great, said it was chiefly for the sake of the heathen, instead of reading, that they might learn from them what they ought to worship. Thus, in the 7th century, we find two eminent men, St. Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop, both employing the arts extensively in the service of religion. Bede gives an account of the latter bringing paintings from Rome to adorn his church at Weremouth. The images

of the Virgin Mary and twelve apostles were disposed on the roof at the east end, carried from wall to wall, arranged, apparently, in tablets or panels, for they were doubtless executed on wood and in distemper. Subjects of Gospel history were disposed on the south wall; the visions of the Apocalypse of St. John on the north.

That abuses, however, had crept in very early we have the testimony of St. Augustine, who says, that he knew many who were adorers of pictures and sculpture; but it was not until the 8th century that an attempt was made to suppress the practice: this, however, was attempted by the Emperor Leo, known thence as the Iconoclast. By him religious pictures were proscribed in the churches of Constantinople and the provinces; they were by his edict defaced and covered with a smooth surface of plaster; but so greatly were the popular feelings outraged by these proceedings, that civil war, embittered by theological controversy, raged throughout the Roman empire for upwards of a century. To settle the question, his son and successor, Constantine, called a council of the church at Constantinople, A.D. 754, which pronounced a unanimous decree, that all visible symbols of Christ, except in the Eucharist, were blasphemous, and that all such monuments of idolatry should be destroyed. Notwithstanding, however, this rigorous persecution of those who fondly clung to a practice to which they had been so long accustomed, this decree was found impossible to be enforced. The second Council of Nice, which took place in 787, finally settled the question as regards the church, and produced a very permanent effect on the practice of church decoration. The records of its proceedings contain a vast deal of information relative to the doctrine of the church on the subject; it asserted, contrary to historic truth, the continuous use of pictures from the time of the apostles; but its decrees respecting the relation of art to the church were the most important, because of the extraordinary influence that they had in reducing art to a mere convention, dependent on the theologian. The council decreed that the structure of images was not the invention of the painters, but the approved legislation and tradition of the church; and in another place he says, "the art alone is the painter's, but the ordination and disposition the holy fathers." The consequence was, that from that time art lost its mental activity, and remained stationary for centuries; and in the Greek church to this day it affords a most singular phenomenon of the repetition of the same form handed down from one generation to another, so much so that Messrs. Didron and Durand, the eminent French antiquaries, remarked in a tour in Greece in 1838, that the resemblance between works executed at St. Mark's, in Venice, by Greek, or as they are better known, Byzantine artists, in the tenth century, was complete even to the number of folds in the drapery, to works many centuries subsequent. The influence of Byzantine art was felt throughout Europe for many centuries. Their art, founded upon the decrees of the Council of Nice, remained, as before observed, a fixed type, without improvement, possessing but a limited mechanical power, and still less feeling for nature.

The freer spirit of the west naturally operated very powerfully in destroying this domination, which fettered the hand of the artist, for although convention can be observed even in the end of the fourteenth century, yet there were many departures from its influence. It is exceedingly curious to note this feature in mediæval religious art, which we have many opportunities of observing throughout the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, whether seen in MSS. sculptures, or paintings on the walls of churches; even in the technical delineation of form down to middle of the last-mentioned period, there seems to have been a fixed rule. This may be partially noticed in the mode of drawing the features, which certainly for a whole century does not materially differ.

After the decision of the Council of Nice no serious opposition was made to pictures in churches, and there can hardly be a doubt but that every church had some kind of religious painting on its walls.

In the 12th century, when so great an impulse was given to the arts, we find the voice of eloquent St. Bernard raised against those

monstrous combinations of forms painted on the walls of churches. "Monstrous centaurs! half men, spotted tigers," &c.; he continues, you see under one head many bodies, and again on one body many heads. Here is observed the tail of a serpent on a quadruped, &c.; and he observes, the whole day is occupied in admiring these things rather than in meditating on the law of God. I should imagine that those grotesque figures common on Norman fonts, are similar to those alluded to by this father.

The improvement and advance in architecture in the 12th and 13th centuries, were accompanied by a corresponding progress in the art of painting and design, and our parochial as well as our cathedral churches received as much decoration as expense and circumstances permitted, and thus it continued until the 16th century, when one of the earliest acts of the reformation in this country, was the condemnation of paintings in churches; at this period, they were covered with whitewash and defaced, and their places supplied with texts of Scripture. JOHN GREEN WALLER.

#### MASONIC HALL AT COWES.

HOT as the weather was, Mr. Editor, I have actually been thrown into a cold perspiration,—may even positively congealed, transformed into a Hecia, and only this eruption can relieve me. Is it possible, that the Masonic Hall at Cowes is designed to be anything like the wood-cut in the *Illustrated News*? Why, it out-Peckaniffs Peckaniff! Though the place itself is called Cowes, there is no occasion for the people there, those at least concerned in this particular matter, to shew themselves downright calves. Most unlucky was it for the architect that there was any fuss at all on the occasion of laying the first stone, because had it not been for that highly interesting ceremony, the *Illustrated* would never have thought of illustrating him and his building as it has now done. What a delicious tit-bit would that same Masonic Hall be for Welby Pugin to show up, in a second volume of his "Contrasts," as a specimen of our classical Anglo-Grecian style! Why, Sir, surely the illustrious *Illustrated* must have had a wicked hoax put upon it by some malicious person; or else its architectural *artist* must have palmed upon us an idea, an invention of his own, as a veritable copy of the architect's own drawing, in which he flatters the Cowes building and its architect, by making the Grecian Doric pilasters twelve diameters high!

BUDOWNIN.

P.S. Can you tell me the name of the architectural journal which is published at Edinburgh? That there is some Scotch publication of the kind is evident, because otherwise, the cannie Scotchmen would surely not fail to correspond and communicate with English ones, and to let us know who is the Scotch Barry, who the Scotch Smirke.

#### THE SAILORS' HOME, LIVERPOOL.

THIS building, the first stone of which has been recently laid with so much parade by the Prince Albert, is to be in the Elizabethan style, with gables, towers, vanes, and ogge beaded roofs, and will stand near the eastern end of the Custom-house. Its site possesses a frontage to Hanover-street of 168 feet; to Paradise-street of 53 feet; to Canning-place opposite the Post-office, of 95 feet; and to the back passages leading from Canning-place to Paradise-street, of 175 feet. The principal entrance front, opposite the Post-office, is divided by the bays common to the Tudor style, into five compartments. The centre one will contain the doorway, with a recessed porch, flanked by Doric pilasters and columns. At each of the four angles of the building there will be a square tower, 104 feet high, with ogge-beaded roofs, surmounted with gilt spires and vane. On each of the two sides fronting Hanover-street, and towards the back passage, there will be between the extreme towers, five breaks or projections. These, as well as the projected divisions of the other fronts, will finish with broken curvilinear gables, with brackets, pinnacles, &c. The whole of the four fronts is filled with mullioned and transomed windows, so arranged, that, the floor in the interior crossing them about the middle, they will light, at once, two stories